

A
WORD
IN ITS
SEASON

1st Series

No. 283

October 1996

Contents

"PART WITH ME"

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

"HIS OWN SON"

"PART WITH ME"

1 Chronicles 12: 16-18; John 17: 24 Ephesians 2: 4-7

J.R.S. One thing, among many, that affected us this morning was the thought of part with Christ. He speaks of part with Me. He says to Peter "thou hast not part with me, except I wash thee", and I think we enjoyed some experience of that. In the light of that I suggest that we think of these three Scriptures in which, first of all in Chronicles, it is David's circumstances that are in view and these children of Benjamin and Judah who were of his own. There was one who could say "thine are we and with thee". David at this time had been anointed but he was not yet publicly known as king. He was already marked out by God and God said of him "I have found a man after my own heart". He is a wonderful type of the Lord Jesus Christ, as we all know and value, but he was not yet publicly owned as king, so that these persons would enjoy something of privilege with him although he has not as yet crowned publicly.

In John's gospel the Lord looks on to what He will enjoy with the saints in the presence of God. The sphere of testing and testimony and weakness and that side of things which affects us all is past. That has wrought its own work for God; it is that they may be there. Again it is His own, those whom the Father has given Him that they might be there to behold His glory which the Father had given Him. There is much in these verses that would help us in enquiry together.

In Ephesians, it is what God is doing with Christ and the saints and the assembly especially in the way of display - "raised us up together, and made us sit down together", this is surely part with Him. It is in view of display. God has things that He loves to display, His own work and it all centres around Christ.

D.S. I am sure there is a fulness in these Scriptures, of which we would seek to get the benefit. In your thanksgiving, you spoke of fresh committals. When we gathered this morning we said, "thine are we, David", or "thine are we, Jesus".

J.R.S. We make a committal to the Lord in putting our hands to the loaf. The apostle says "love not in word only but in deed and in truth". That would be like putting our hands to the loaf, and as you say Amasai, in type, is expressing that for us.

D.S. Not only does he say "thine are we, David", but he says "and with thee, thou son of Jesse", as if we commit ourselves for the days that are left to us in the testimony here.

J.R.S. That is right. David at this time was in rejection. God was gathering His own and there were those who were coming to David, despite the testing and reproach that it meant. What they found was safety, like Abiathar, "with me thou are in safe keeping".

J.D.G. Does the reference to Benjamin and Judah involve kindredship?

J.R.S. That is good. They are his own stock, so that they would know him in a special way and he them. Their committal to him is beyond that, is it not? They are not only enjoying the ordering of God and the refreshment it would be to David in kindredship in these circumstances, but they are actually coming out as on his side, fully.

J.D.G. Does not kindredship in one sense underlie the Spirit coming upon Amasai. The note says he was clothed with the Spirit.

J.R.S. That is good, linking with our privileged position. The Spirit having come upon the saints and dwelling in them because they have already identified themselves with the Lord Jesus in His work for them.

D.C.B. We had reference also this morning to 'the Sanctifier and those sanctified are all of one'. Does that underlie this part with Him?

J.R.S. I think it does. Indeed it would be a similar thought to kindredship. It involves what the Lord has entered into in sanctification. The word in Hebrews is "by which will we have been sanctified" - that the will of God is not only that we should be safe from the wrath of God in forgiveness of sins, very important as that is, but that we should be sanctified with Christ.

D.C.B. I was thinking of the fulness of the way in which it is referred to - "are all of one", without exact definition of what that one is. It is all of the same.

J.R.S. As we were saying yesterday it involves the same order. It involves that order of manhood.

G.B. Paul writes to the Corinthians as to "those sanctified and called". Is the reference to sanctification of the calling dignifying and unifying?

J.R.S. The calling is intensely individual. As Romans says "called saints", saints by divine calling, because it has pleased God in His sovereign operations to call us out as He did Abraham. Appreciating that would involve a fresh incentive in our hearts to identify ourselves with our David.

G.B. Amasai is able to speak not only for himself, but for those with him.

J.R.S. We are thankful for those who have done that - "Thine are we". What he was concerned about was not their side of it, but that they were available to David; they were at his bidding and his disposal.

E.J.J. In Matthew 5, Jesus says "blessed the peace-makers, for they shall be called sons of God" (v 9). There seems a sense in the verses you have read of peace, which is so necessary when we are surrounded by the contrary. As we come together we have a sense of peace, because that is what the Lord's presence would bring.

J.R.S. It is something that He has to impart and He imparts it by what He is. We may carry the anxious side of things with us, and it is right to feel things, but Amasai would say "peace be to thee".

J.R.C. They say here, "Thine are we, David". Many people say they are the Lord's, but "and with thee" is a fuller statement. I think the test is "and with thee".

J.R.S. One is profession, "thine are we", and we are thankful for all that can say that - and may we all be able to say it more - but would

you say to be "with thee", involves having been taken possession of by Christ Jesus?

J.R.C. I am sure that would be right. Every interest of the Lord Jesus then becomes the motivating power in my life. In Luke 11, the Lord says "he that is not with me is against me" (v 23).

J.R.S. That has not been modified in our time; it still stands and it behoves us to consider soberly where our activity and allegiance lies. To be with Him involves intimacy. There was a time when they went a day's journey, and assumed He was with the company, but that was not enough.

J.R.C. Would it be right then to think that 'with me' involves communion?

J.R.S. That is saying a great deal: for myself I would have to confess that I know very little about it. I am sure that there is some sense in which the Lord makes known His will in relation to us, and that is encouraging.

J.M. Among the twelve disciples, there was one who was not with them; he was the betrayer.

J.R.S. Although he was present in the company until the very last, he had no part in what was proceeding.

J.M. I notice that the word betray comes in here "but if to betray me to mine enemies". It was a clear indication that that disciple was not with the Lord when he did what he did.

J.R.S. It says that Satan entered into him, a very solemn matter.

J.T.B. Would "with him", involve the Colossian epistle? The context here is Hebron and that would particularly link with Colossians - "buried with him in baptism", and "raised with him", and then "if ye have been raised with the Christ". Would that be the context?

J.R.S. That is very helpful. These things are true of us, if they are true. They are true of us objectively, but Paul is saying, so to speak, it is according to the truth that you have been raised with Christ, but is it true in experience? Is that what you understand by it?

J.T.B. "If therefore ye have been raised with the Christ, seek the things which are above".

J.R.S. There would be evidence by our conduct as to how fully these wonderful truths have entered into us: our appreciation of them would find expression.

W.M.G. In John 12 it says "there therefore they made him a supper, and Martha served. But Lazarus was one of those at table with him" (v 2). Would that bear out your thoughts relating to Colossians?

J.R.S. I think it would; that was an 'over-the-Jordan' position. Death had come in but they were beyond that. That is all figurative, but Lazarus was one of those at table with Him. You might say, He was with them, but the more elevated view is that they were with Him. That, among other things, is what the Lord's day is for, to engage in the experience of being with Him.

Rem. Prior to what Amasai says, David makes a committal to them; he says "if ye come peaceably to me to help me, my heart shall be knit unto you". That is a fine thought.

J.R.S. So that there would be one heart. Later on, they came to David to make him king and they came with a perfect heart and without double heart. There was really one affection, one centre. It is the little things that gain some place in our outlook and affections that distract us.

J.M. Peter never forgot his experience on the high mountain, having part with Him there; being witness of His majesty, he could say that we were with Him on the holy mount.

J.R.S. That was a great privilege; that was really part of his experience with God.

J.D.G. You alluded to the stronghold working out in the testimonial situation. I was thinking of the Lord at the end of Matthew's gospel in regard to what you have said about 'my heart being knit', - "I am with you". It was his committal, too, in relation to the testimony.

J.R.S. It was in Galilee that he said that. Matthew does not make much of Jerusalem, but he speaks of Galilee. That would be a very

testing sphere; the Lord says in that setting, "I am with you".

J.D.G. It brought out the moral side of our committal and that has been mentioned, "with thee". The Lord is committed to that "where two or three are gathered together there am I in the midst of them".

J.R.S. That is very important because without that there is nothing. If we take away the moral side, my having to do with God inwardly and being affected by the presence of God, there is nothing at all.

E.W.J. Is there a connection with the Lord knowing those that are His? We are speaking about the testimonial side: David is in reproach here. In the end of Hebrews it says "therefore let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach", and then "let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually to God" (13: 13,15). The result is a moral basis.

J.R.S. . We would feel the edge of that, "go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach". There are three steps there; going forth to Him, is one thing, that is outlook; without the camp involves my having to do with circumstances here; and bearing his reproach is the continuation of it.

E.J.J. You mentioned the testimony here. What about these helpers? Sometimes I can be a hindrance, but it is a great thing to be a helper, is it not?

J.R.S. It would bring us all in. They are not named, but they are under the influence of peace, and I suppose that that is the only atmosphere in which we can be of help.

D.S. It is a constant prayer of the saints, praying for the peace of Jerusalem in view of the development of the truth and the maintenance of the service of God.

J.R.S. Peace is the fruit of righteousness. In John 17 there is a lot of affection - more than we could ever compass - but the Lord Jesus says to the Father "as to those whom thou hast given me, I desire that where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me", He would like the saints to see the beauty of the glory that the Father has given Him. This chapter is full

of giving, the Father giving to the Son comes in at least seven times - different things He has given to the Son. Such is the level of fatherhood and sonship. It is displayed in the way in which the Father gives, which is instructive. Here the Lord values it so much that He would like the saints to see it, to enjoy it.

G.A.B. This is a glory unique to Christ. Is there any type that could describe this?

J.R.S. It is "the glory which thou hast given me". There are several glories in John's gospel. I am not sure that I could say what this glory is. Do you have some impression?

G.A.B. As has been said before, it is something that we do not share, but we can see. I was wondering about the coat that Israel gave to his son, which others could see, but they could not share in it.

J.R.S. Because he loved him, because he was son of his old age. That is very instructive. I am sure what you say is to be borne in mind fully that whilst there is what is peculiar to Christ which we never could share, we can behold it. The suggestion seems to me that the Lord values it so much that He would like the saints to see it.

E.W.J. Would you say a depth of feeling enters into this, "I desire"? I feel the need to have deeper feelings in regard to understanding of truth. In many instances there is a tremendous depth of feeling uttered by the Father and by the Son.

J.R.S. The truth is always to exercise us. We need the help of the Spirit of God to reach a judgment of it. This is the realm where we are tested, but to be ready to receive an impression of the truth is part of the privilege that we have.

E.W.J. You refer to the Spirit; I wondered whether if we gave more room to the Holy Spirit of God, we would enter more into these fine feelings. It speaks about grieving the Spirit.

J.D.G. The Lord expresses a desire here - "I desire" - and it is expressed to His Father. How does the Father answer that activity? He says "Father as to those whom thou hast given me, I desire that

where I am they also may be with me, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me". It seems to me that He is looking to the Father to bring about His request.

J.R.S. I had felt that this is something that is yet to be fulfilled. Do you think that is right?

J.D.G. Yes, as to the actuality of it.

J.R.S. The spirit of it, to which you are drawing attention, is that the saints would be drawn into the realm of the Father's love for the Son. I feel that the great depth of the dispensation, and the way in which God has been made known to us, is that God is love. We are drawn into a realm where love is operating and in expression. This is one of the features of it.

J.R.C. It is certainly something to think over. Surely there would be some spiritual experience of this currently.

J.R.S. I feel that it is bound up with the Father honouring the Son. The saints being there is like Israel putting his hands on the head of Ephraim and the head of Manasseh and blessing Joseph. It says that he blessed Joseph; he had his hands on Ephraim and Manasseh but he blessed Joseph.

J.R.C. I think that helps. I was wondering about Joseph's brethren. It was the greatest desire of Joseph that his brethren might come round and see the glory that was distinctly his.

J.R.S. The visions that he had would be the basis of it, that God in His infinite ways would bring the brethren round to see what was in His heart as to Joseph.

J.R.C. Where we finished reading it says, "foundation of the world. Righteous Father". Does that belong to that verse or the next? Do you not think that the Lord Jesus is relying on the fact that everything that is right before God will be taken account of, and that involves Christ being magnified amongst the brethren?

J.R.S. "It was right that we should make merry and rejoice". The Father as supreme, the source of all, the great operator in the

universe would see to it that what is due to the Son, both officially and in moral excellence, is attributed to Him.

J.M; It says in John 3, "the Father loves the Son, and has given all things to be in his hand" (v 35). Would that link with these verses?

J.R.S. I think it would. It is not only the Father's trust in the Son, but it is that He would give character to them; "given all things to be in his hand", in order that what He is, the distinction of the Son, would impart character to them.

J.M. You get the impression that the Father holds nothing back in relation to the Son.

J.T.B. Would Psalm 21 give some indication of the Lord's desires currently met - "Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips" and then typically He is glorified - "met him with the blessings of goodness; thou hast set a crown of pure gold on his head" (vv 2,3).

J.R.S. That is very suggestive. We have difficulty in encompassing the scope of the Father's love for the Son, but such a Psalm suggests how it is worked out and filled out in detail. It will take all the saints actually to fill that out. Think of the resource in the Spirit, but every impression by the Spirit responding to Christ.

Ephesians begins "God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love wherewith he loved us ... he has raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ", that is the primary thing. The love of God, for His creature, great and wonderful and beyond description as that is, is one thing, but the fulness of the love of God extends to the working out of what is in His own heart, and that involves "raised us up together and made us sit down together".

E.J.J. It shows the importance of a sense of mercy. I suppose Paul had a deeper sense of mercy than everybody else. Having the sense of the mercy of God seems to be the introduction to what follows.

J.R.S. That is right and there is that portion in brackets "we too being dead in offences". There are, I think, four riches mentioned in Ephesians and in at least two of them they are directly in contrast with offences. That is worth thinking about.

D.S. "Raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus", that is the glorified Man, set at God's right hand, the Man of His purpose, which perhaps links with the seeing His glory of John 17.

J.R.S. A brother serving in London touched us all by referring to the anointed man, and the man anointed. Christ Jesus is the anointed Man, Jesus Christ is the Man anointed. The anointed Man relates to God's purpose; the Man anointed relates to the uniqueness of Christ.

D.S. Christ Jesus here is the Man of God's purpose. Before the worlds were founded He had in mind that He would be displayed in glory and the saints would be able to take account of that glory.

J.R.S. I take it that this is a necessity of God's love. He has raised us up together and made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ. It is part of the purpose of God's love and it works out for the display of the riches - "display in the coming ages the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus".

G.A.B. "We too being dead in offences" is in brackets, almost as if it is incidental to the working of divine love. That is not going to stand in the way of God's operations.

J.R.S. Evil was allowed in God's infinite wisdom to enter the universe by way of sin. God has used that for the display of His glory and the knowledge of Himself and His grace, and disposes of it. What a God we have!

W.M.G. These words are very affecting "raised us up together, and has made us sit down together in the heavenlies". There is a suggestion of the tabernacle of God is with men, nearness and love permeating the area of 'together.

J.R.S. So that even if it is Jew and Gentile, they are still together: one new man altogether. Here it is together, Christ and the saints. Is it right to say that this is a necessity for God's love?

J.D.G. The Father delights to do it for the satisfaction of Himself.

J.R.C. It involves the outflow of grace. We have to remember mercy in the condition in which we are. Grace is in relation to the position in which we shall be finally.

J.R.S. That is a helpful distinction. So long as we are conscious of ever having need (past or present) we shall remember mercy, and give God thanks for it, He is rich in it.

J.R.C. In Luke the Lord said "that man went down to his house justified". In other words He gets round to God's view of the whole matter, he received mercy.

J.R.S. That is right.

D.S. There are the two parentheses, one is "we too being dead in offences", the next one says "ye are saved by grace", and it is a permanent abiding result, the footnote tells us. It is not that you are going to be, but you are, the actual fact of what has been and so abides.

J.R.S. So that what God is in love shines out in these attributes of God, grace being one of them, and righteousness another.

D.S. The enemy made the attack on Adam and God said he will crush his heel, but the woman's seed will crush his head. Not only is Christ glorified, but all the saints with him, God, as it were, fills the universe with the history of His shining in the saints who are like Christ. What an answer to the enemy's activity!

J.R.S. So there is a touch of triumph in the thought "made us sit down together", a certain finality which nothing is going to disturb; it will remain, I suppose; God displaying to a wondering universe the establishment in triumph of what is for Himself.

J.D.G. We know it now. It says, "that he might display in the coming ages the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness towards us in

Christ Jesus". That is going to be displayed in the future, but it is known by the believer now. The note says that it is not exactly what was in the heart of God, but it has been expressed to us. We are the subjects of the working of it.

J.R.S. So that by the Spirit we enter into the joy of it, and that involves the saints together.

J.M. The glad tidings will be preached in a short time, and the attitude of God as we have here is just the same.

J.R.S. God is favourable towards men. This is more, I believe, the line of the glad tidings of the glory of the blessed God.

J.M. Is it not wonderful that mercy meets us in our need and grace gives us a part to sit down together?

J.D.G. That is a good remark as to the glad tidings of the glory of the blessed God, because it is the riches of His grace and kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. It is an activity at the present time in relation to Christ exalted.

J.R.S. That is right: that is the privilege into which we have to enter, God's delight in the exaltation of Christ.

J.D.G. It is a wonderful thing not only to be affected by the relief of our sins but by the place that God has given Christ and His attitude towards us in Christ Jesus.

D.C.B. You referred to the necessity of this from God's side. Could you say a little more of that?

J.R.S. It is "because of His great love wherewith He loved us". His great love, I think, extends towards reaching the fulness of His purpose and God's purpose is not reached unless what is in the mind of God in relation to Christ exalted is in display. The saints are in the joy of this in spirit. We all say, and mean, I am sure, that we look for a day when there will be no interruption of this (which is very true) but the presence of the Spirit and the work of God involves that I am living there now, for the pleasure of God.

J.T.B. Does Mephibosheth represent it currently - brought to Jerusalem by the kindness of David and to eat bread at the king's table, is in type an Ephesian saint, do you think?

J.R.S. He spoke of his own weakness there, but when David is to be brought back he does not speak of himself at all, he is thinking just of David Christ exalted.

EDINBURGH

26 November 1995

Key to initials

Edinburgh unless otherwise stated. (Not all speakers were identifiable from the tapes: any omissions or mis-identifications are regretted).

G.A.Brown; J.T.Brown; J.R.Cumming; J.D.Gray; J.Marshall;
D.Scougall; J.R.Surtees (Spaldwick)

PREACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD

John Surtees

John 10: 9-11

These verses speak of the Lord Jesus; they speak also of someone else who is the enemy of your soul and mine. He is spoken of here as the thief; he has other names, but first of all I would like to speak of the Lord Jesus. He is the way in, the door but the way into what? The way into blessing, the way into liberty. In this section of this gospel, the Lord is bringing individuals along to put them into the flock. I suppose Nicodemus is one. The Lord Jesus spoke to him and he was tough material; he was afraid to come to the Lord Jesus by day. He came to Him by night. At the end, he brought myrrh and aloes for His burial; he would be one of the flock. The woman of John 4, she too would be one of the flock. There were others too,

ending perhaps with the man in John 9. The Scripture had spoken of six stone water vessels of two or three measures each: the result was that they were all filled and they were all available. The Lord would have them all in the flock.

Do you know what a flock is? One thing about a flock of sheep is that they are always together. If one is missing, if there is one by itself, you know that there is something wrong. The Lord speaks here of the flock, but He speaks of the way in, "I am the door". Nicodemus thought he could do something to get in. There was another man who on one occasion ran up to the Lord and said, "what must I do that I may inherit eternal life?" The Lord Jesus says "I am the door". He has done all that could be done, He has borne the judgment that stands out against you and me because we are sinners, because we have to do with a God who is righteous and holy and also, wonderfully, a God who is love - a God of love, God is love.

The Lord Jesus went unto death to remove the guilt that lies upon you and upon me. God commends His love to us in that "we being still sinners, Christ has died for us". It goes on to speak of "the righteousness of God is towards all". You could go into the street, or into anybody's house, or into any building, or any prison, or any church, or anywhere you like, anywhere you chose to go, and you could say to the people there "the righteousness of God is towards you", because that is what the Scripture says. That is, God is disposed towards us, to bring us into the blessing and liberty of being righteous before Him, but it is upon all those that believe. I would have to ask myself the question, if I was to stand before a holy God, as indeed we all shall one day - "every one shall give an account of himself to God" - how would I shape up in view of the righteousness of God? There are those upon whom God has conferred righteousness. A wonderful matter, a wonderful blessing, but who is it? It is all those who believe. There is no question of trying to do something or to be something, the righteousness of God is upon all those that believe. This is the way in. I am called upon to

do nothing more and nothing less than believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is the way in.

It says "if any one enter in by me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and shall go out and shall find pasture". Why be outside? The flock are inside and they have liberty to move in and out, and they have the liberty of the Lord Jesus to move within the realm of liberty and where there is pasture and where the flock are blessed, and where there is the Good Shepherd. It is simply by entering in by the Lord Jesus. We cannot merit our own salvation. It is surprising how from time to time we need reminding that the work of Christ is sufficient in itself for meeting a holy and a righteous God. So He would invite those to whom He is speaking, He would draw them near; "if any one enter in by me". If any one has to do with Me, if any one is ready to give up the line of effort and all that relates to ourselves and cast all that we have upon One who is holy, upon One who has suffered the just for the unjust, One who has met all that is due to God in holiness, One who has identified Himself with all that we are in unholiness, having been made sin for us, then we may enter in by Him.

Think of all those things of which we read of in the newspapers, murder, deceit, darkness, all these things. Men do their best to grapple with them but the Lord Jesus was made sin. We may forget this. Have we ever been found in deceit? The Lord Jesus was made that. Have we ever been found with a murderous spirit? John in his epistle says, we do not have to slay our brother to be a murderer, all we do is say in our heart that we may hate him; the thing before the eye of God is just the same, the character of it is just the same. The Lord Jesus was made sin. We enter in by Him, we say that if He has borne the guilt of my sins, if He has shed His blood as a holy offering to God, meeting the righteous requirement of God, I can take refuge and give thanks to the Lord for His having shed His blood. One of the hymns (233) says;

No victim of inferior worth
Could bear the stroke that justice aimed;
And none but He in heaven or earth,

Could offer that which justice claimed.

The judgment fell on the Lord Jesus, He was the One who bore the judgment which was due to me. The scripture says, "who himself bore our sins in his body on the tree". Have you laid hold of that? He did not depute it to another, He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree. Does everyone believe that? We know what it is to be naughty or to be disobedient or to wriggle out of something by generating some sort of feeling of uncertainty where guilty, or something like that, but the Lord Jesus bore everything.

He is the door. In contrast to that there is this one of whom he speaks, "the thief comes not but that he may steal, and kill and destroy". This the thief, the robber, is not at all principled with what he does; he will come and grab whatever he can, and off he will go. He will not bother about whether he has ruined anything, or whether he causes any distress, or anything like that; he will come and ruin what he can, and go. That comes from Satan, the thief will come and steal, he will steal away the effect of the word of God in your heart. It is not his property, it does not belong to him. The work of God in your soul belongs to God. It has its origin with God, it is of God. If there should be a desire in my heart at all for the Lord Jesus, it is something from God. There is one who is waiting to steal it away; he would occupy you with anything else in a most unprincipled way but it is not only that, it is to steal, kill and destroy so that there is nothing left for God. He is a destroyer, that is one of his names. God will cause that the name by which he is known is the judgment which is eventually meted out upon him, the devil. He will find his place along with those that are destroyed. The lake of fire is a terrible matter and it belongs to the devil and his angels.

But in contrast to that, I want to refer to "I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly". I would like to attract us into that. John speaks, as we know, of the Good Shepherd laying down His life for the sheep. You children can visualise that, the sheep would be lost without it, He lays down His life for the sheep, He has done that. He would say to us that He is come that we might have life. There are many things which the Lord speaks of that lay

behind His coming. He speaks on one occasion of not coming into the world that he might judge the world. And then He came into the world as enlightening the world, He came in here that we might have life and have it abundantly. That is to say that they are living there to God, they are living in relation to what is for the heart of God, they are living in relation to His own pleasure, to what is for God. They are not concerned about themselves, not concerned directly for their own happiness, God provides for that. God provides for everything that they need. It is like the Hebrew bondman "I love my master, my wife and my children, I will not go out free", that is living in relation to God. He is living in relation to the circumstances which belong to his master. He is living in relation to the liberty and the provision and the blessing and the order and the provision that is there.

I think that is what is behind this, "that they might have life, and might have it abundantly"; they might have it in the presence of God in His own realm. It says of the Lord Jesus that in that He lives, He lives to God. I suppose in this day, probably, more than any day, men are living to themselves, and they are not happy, it does not bring about happiness, or joy. I remember from something that happened when I was a boy about 8 years old; my mother said to me, I think you will find now that when you are pleasing other people you will be much happier. That has become a sort of a motto as far as I am concerned, a kind of a landmark (though often failing in it) and I can see the truth of it. When we are living in relation to ourselves, no matter what the level of our outlook is, you can guarantee that you will not be happy for long but "that they might have life, and might have it abundantly", is living in relation of One who has given His life for us.

This is something which I trust we can all understand. There are those in the scriptures who lived to others. We have spoken of Mephibosheth; he was the son of Jonathan, and somebody was careless with him when he was a baby and as a result of that he was never able to walk. That could be a pretty poor outlook; he could be self occupied, occupied with his miserable condition, but was he? No, he was not occupied with himself, he was occupied with David's

pleasure; even when David himself was concerned about who was first and who was last, Mephibosheth said nothing else matters but that my lord the king has come home in peace. I think he was in the enjoyment of life. He was in the enjoyment of liberty in living typically in relation to God. There were others. Paul who was a wonderful vessel of the testimony, he says "for me to live is Christ, and to die gain". I have often thought about that, I am sure we all have. What did Paul mean by that? Whatever the circumstances - he was in prison at one time - he said, in whatsoever circumstances he was he had learned to be satisfied in himself, not with himself, as we have noticed, but in himself, he was satisfied with the work of God proceeding and growing and he enjoyed the realm of life. The Lord Jesus has come that we might have life and might have it abundantly. He has many things to give, He has joy, He has peace, He has liberty, and He has life. The glad tidings is all about it, what God has to give. May the Lord help us to lay hold of it in His precious Name.

EDINBURGH

"HIS OWN SON"

James S.Gray

Numbers 3: 11-15; Malachi 3: 16,17

That seems rather a striking expression, "his own son". The apostle Paul uses it in connection with the wonderful sacrifice of Jesus, that God spared not His own Son: "He who, yea, has not spared his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him grant us all things?" Rom 8: 32. But in this passage in Malachi, I think that God is using it of those that belong to Him. I have been struck by the fact that we have all this numbering of the tribes, one after the other, at the beginning of Numbers, and there is a reference in chapter 1, to the fact that "... the Levites after the tribe of their fathers were not numbered among them", v 47. But then God first of all says here in chapter 3, specially about the Levites taken from among the children of Israel in place of the firstborn, that they are

going to be His. I was thinking of that as to a divine claim being set out as a matter of deep affection on God's part. It seems to me that it would be helpful for us to think about that in connection with the place that divine favour has given to us. This reference back to the smiting of the firstborn in the land of Egypt shows that possession of the firstborn, represented now in the Levites, was in God's mind long before. God does not give up His thoughts: He keeps to them. "On the day that I smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, I hallowed unto me all the firstborn in Israel ... mine shall they be". How wonderful that is! Do we regard ourselves thus? God regards us in this way. "Mine shall they be": what a claim that is! It is the claim of affection. God says, as it were. There is something special in mind. I suppose it would fit with the heavenly calling of believers in the present time, that we are called specially to the service of God's things, the holy things, the things concerning the sanctuary and the things concerning the saints. That is what the service involves, but the ground of it is that these persons belong to God. It is striking that this claim should be, as it were, sealed, by this majestic statement here: "I am Jehovah". We find that in many places in the Old Testament, but God is, as it were, sealing His claim by the authority of love, that the Levites are to be His. And so it is as to us. We might use language like that of Gideon and say, 'Well, I am in this kind of circumstance, this kind of small locality', and so on, but God's view is 'I have set apart the Levites for Me; they are going to be Mine'. It is striking that God says too, not only "the Levites shall be mine"; but "*for every firstborn is mine*" and it seems to me the thought of the Levites in the divine mind is in connection with sonship. I wondered, therefore, if there is a connection in what comes out right at the end of this same dispensation. (It should perhaps be regarded as beginning with the history at the start of Exodus and culminating here.) God is taking account of those that fear Him and speak often one to another. We have often gone over these precious words as to how God observes it and hears and writes things down, but I was specially thinking of this reference both to the peculiar treasure and to His sparing them "as a man spareth his own son that serveth him". I suggest that that links with the

Levites, that God has in mind that the original thought which He had is not to be lost. Things may have come down to very small proportions after a long history, but the divine thought remains that God loves His "own son", each one of them, and He has in mind still the same standard and level of service towards Himself. We might think in the ordinary sense that if a man had his son serving him, he would think about him specially. I think that would be fair to say. He would always think of him as a son as well as a servant, and God says, "and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him". God has His own sons who serve Him, and they are still here, after all this history, and they are speaking often one to another. God has in view the level of service which He always had in mind for His sons.

It is striking too that God in the earlier reference, I think it is in Exodus 19, in introducing the thought of covenant with His people, speaks of this thought of a peculiar treasure, and here it is again, right at the end. I think it points to the fact that these divine thoughts which claim us in love in view of the divine service will never be changed. They will go right through in spite of external conditions. And so it is what is for God. It is Jehovah of hosts, as we have often noticed, and He has things ordered and ready for the time when the display will come. But at the moment, at the close of the dispensation, we may say God has in mind that each one of us might be freshly encouraged to see that, in His view, we are still according to the original thought, by this description, "his own son that serveth him". God has a special thought for such. He has special care for such. He has special desires for such, that they should enter into the range and liberty and joy of service. It is not now service according to the law. No, it is service with the robe and service with the ring and service with the sandals in the liberty of the house for the pleasure of God. The only way in which it can be fully filled out, I believe, is through the knowledge and enjoyment of the divine love towards us. May we be helped as to it!

LONDON

4 June 1996